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ABSTRACT

The Share and Take Program is a significant component of the induction year for 80 entry-level teachers in 21 inner-city elementary, middle, and high schools in Houston, Texas. The program seeks to hasten beginning teachers' socialization into the profession by concentrating on the development of critical reflection skills: asking questions, observing, sharing experiences, taking risks, and analyzing classroom and school experiences. The program demonstrates that the development of teaching skills can be hastened if the beginning teacher has opportunities for critical reflection in an open, collaborative setting. This paper outlines program content and activities and provides examples of worksheets and instruments used in the program. These examples include: "Sharing Session," "Observation Questions," "Planning a Successful Lesson," "Write and Switch," and "Carousel Brainstorming." (IAH)

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Share and Take: A Path to Critical Reflection for Entry-Level Teachers

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Share and Take: A Path to Critical Reflection for Entry-Level Teachers

Introduction

The Houston school system annually employs up to 800 entry-level teachers. These teachers come from either traditional colleges of education or from the District's own alternative certification program.

A unique Share and Take Program is a significant component of the induction year for 80 entry-level teachers in 21 inner-city elementary, middle, and high schools. Many are from outside of Texas. All are in a professional job that traditionally has been performed in isolation from peers and without extensive supervision.

Purpose of the Program

The Share and Take Program seeks to hasten beginning teachers' socialization into the profession by concentrating on the development of critical reflection skills: asking questions, observing, sharing experiences, taking risks, and analyzing experiences. Reflection for the first year teacher is putting every idea, event, and experience to the question, "What does this mean to me as a teacher?"

Good teachers are made, not born; and, the making of a teacher is a complex process. Reflection is a crucial part of that process and it cannot be expected to develop without training, modeling, and structured experiences. Therefore, the Program offers opportunities to analyze classroom and school experiences.

Structure of the Program

The Share and Take Program operates within the District's support system at the administrative or area level. Six sessions, spaced throughout the school year, are held in area schools which have beginning teachers. Entry-level teachers host each session. They welcome and register participants, provide school/room tours, share

materials, and eventually facilitate sessions. A cooperative network among geographically near personnel sharing common experiences, problems, concerns,. and solutions emerges. School based mentors and administrators frequently attend sessions as non-judgmental consultants, collaborators, and facilitators.

Group inquiry meetings serve as the format for the sessions. Each session builds on previous sessions to address the expressed needs of the participants. Sessions conclude with either a discussion focusing on ways to transfer the information, concepts, techniques, etc. to the real-life of the classroom or an analysis of shared experiences.

Activities of the Program

All activites are structured to utilize participants' prior knowledge and current experiences, provide for analysis, and allow for reflection. Participants also examine their feelings and reactions to situations and individuals in those situations. These activities not only stress critical aspects of teaching/learning and school situations but also provide a framework to extend the reflective process to the participants' real world. Once beginning teachers have this functioning framework, better understandings and alternative behaviors surface.

Since veteran educators attend Share and Take Sessions, the Signature Activity reminds them of the novice's feelings. Participants sign their names three times as fast as possible then switch hands and attempt to sign once. Discussion follows concerning the difficulty of signing with the non-dominant hand and the awkward look of the signature. They relate this to the novice's feelings of discomfort and anxiety in the new role of teacher.

The first Share and Take session occurs approximately two weeks into the school year. The session focuses on sharing early experiences by answering "what" and "how" questions, e.g., "What is your favorite part of the school day?" "Tell about a child in your class or school. How did you come to choose this child?" The facilitator encourages the expression of feelings and observations about events without generalizinng. A call for needs concludes the session. Common responses include questions about planning and presenting instruction, observation of veteran teachers, classroom management, and materials.

Observation of teachers outside the home school occurs at least twice during the first teaching semester. Veteran teachers open their classrooms and closets. Observers may freely move from teacher to teacher without regard to grade or subject. The entire schoolhouse becomes the classroom. Beginning teachers write individual answers to the "Observation Questions" then, in a post-observation meeting, pair to share responses. The facilitator guides in identification of common elements seen and experienced, such as statement of objectives, teacher use of praise and reinforcement, sequencing of instruction, and how these elements form a pattern in the teaching/learning process. Participants develop plans on how they will transfer these elements to their own teaching.

This planning results in a "Classroom Project": four 45 minute lessons applying the newly gained pedagogical knowledge and insights. Guidance and feedback comes from the Professional Development Specialist, school-based mentor, principal, and one another. "Planning a Successful Lesson" and training in the lesson cycle focus preparation and presentation on the critical attributes of the teaching process. Practice sessions using role playing cause participants to consider the effects of a variety of teaching and management behaviors.

The Professional Development Specialist observes the lessons and conducts conferences. The conferences' goals are to provoke reflection about the lesson without judgment, therefore; the Specialist uses open-ended, developmental questions:

> How do you think the students did at meeting the lesson's objective(s)?
> What data from your teaching supports your conclusion?
> What might be a problem?
> How would you like to change the lesson?
> What plans and/or decisions will you make as a result of this lesson?
> About what would you like to know more?

Beginning teachers explore particular interests, such as cooperative learning or the composition process, in specialized sessions or in learning stations staffed by mentors or consultants. Consulting teams of beginning teachers and mentors develop to examine problem areas and coach one another in new teaching strategies.

Activities for processing information through different modalities hasten the development of reflective skills. These activities include the K-W-L Strategy; the think, pair, and share and the write, pair, and share techniques (Write and Switch); and Carousel Brainstorming. Carousel brainstorming creates energy as well as interesting responses to questions:

What are the characteristics of a successful teacher?
What are the abilities of a successful teacher?
What forces help a teacher do a good job?
What forces restrain a teacher's effectiveness?

Responses, collected several times throughout the year, are displayed at the final Share and Take session. The early unsophisticated responses always surprise the teachers and are a graphic illustration of their growth in reflective skills.

Evaluation of the Program

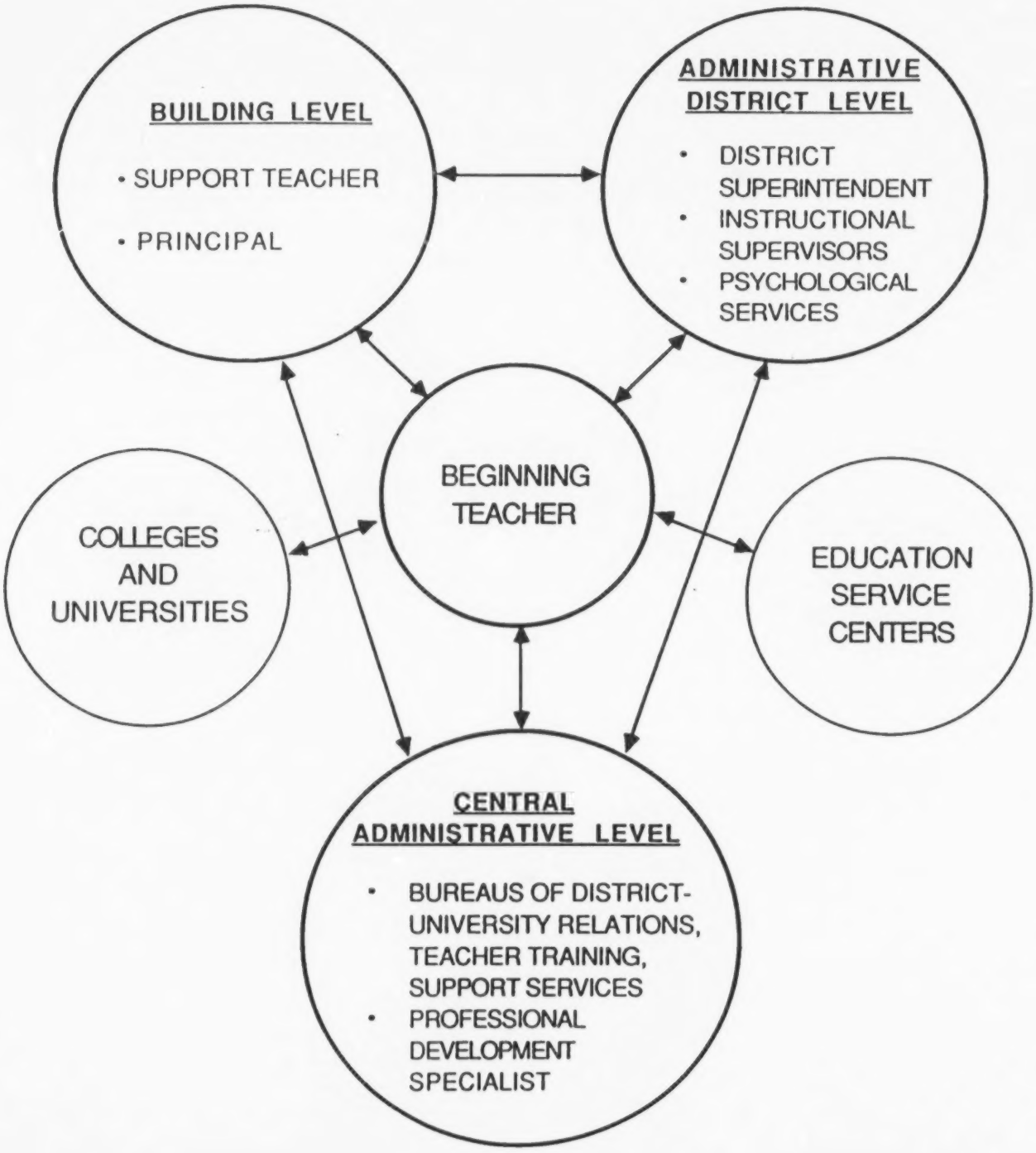
Evaluation of the Share and Take Progam is within the district's larger evaluation of the induction and alternative certification programs. The evaluation plan includes qualitative and quantitative data measuring the effectiveness and impact of all training activities through such indicators as number of participants, the design and quality of the training activities on teacher performance (Texas Teacher Appraisal System), and the impact of the activities on teacher satisfaction and retention. Instrumentation includes workshop evaluations, questionnaires, attendance records, retention records, interviews with participants, and administrative observations.

Summary of the Program

The Share and Take Program demonstrates that teaching skill development can be quickened if the beginning teacher has opportunities for critical reflection in an open, collaborative setting. The Program gives entry-level teachers strategies to examine professional

experiences in a secure, non-judgmental environment. The structure of the various activities, discussions, and practice sessions allows the teachers to answer the question, "What does this mean to me as a teacher?" Such a program gives students of first year teachers better instruction , gives the profession more competent and confident members, and gives the entry-level teacher decision making power.

A SUPPORT SYSTEM*



*Adapted from Selinger, S. Orientation Workshop for Support Teaching, "A Teacher Conservation Program". Houston Independent School District, 1989.

Sharing Session

The purpose of this acitivity is to share thoughts, experiences, and ideas with colleagues. Below are a few suggestions for discussion.

1. What is the best, funniest, most interesting experience you have had so far in your school/classroom?

2. Tell about one child/student in your classroom or school. How did you come to select this individual?

3. What is your favorite time of the school day? Why?

4. What is a classroom management strategy that is working for you?

5. What lesson have you taught that you feel was effective? How do you know it was successful?

6. About what would you like more information?

Observation Questions

1. Describe the introduction to the lesson.

3. What was the lesson's focus?

4. How was the objective communicated?

5. How was the lesson tied to prior and future learning?

6. How did the teacher emphasize the importance of the learning?

7. How did the teacher solicit student participation?

8. How did the teacher hold all students accountable for learning?

9. Describe the sequence of the instructional activities.

10. How was the lesson's content related to student interests?

11. How did the teacher reinforce correct student responses and clarify incorrect responses?

12. What closure techniques did you see? How did the teacher close each segment of the lesson?

13. Did the lesson ask students to demonstrate:

knowledge? Examples:

comprehension? Examples:

application? Examples:

analysis? Examples:

synthesis? Examples:

evaluation? Examples:

14. How was student behavior managed?

15. What classroom procedures and routines were evident?

16. How did the teacher deal with off-task or disruptive behavior?

17. How did the teacher demonstrate fairness and consistency?

18. What three things most impressed you?

a.

b.

c.

19. What are you going to try with your students? Will you modify it? How?

20. About what would you like more information?

Planning a Successful Lesson

Careful lesson planning results in successful lessons. The following questions will assist you in planning effective lessons. Try to answer each question when you plan your lesson.

1. What are you going to teach?

2. What will students know or be able to do as a result of this lesson. Examples: concept, skill, principle, rule, application of a skill.

3. From where does the lesson's content come? Examples: student need, curriculum scope and sequence, textbook, standardized or other test results, content related to the sequence of learning.

4. How do you know students are ready for this lesson? Examples: pre-test, previous assignments, observation, student interest.

5. How is the lesson related to previous and future lessons? Examples: reteaching, enrichment, practice, prerequisite, review, timeliness, extension.

6. What elements does the lesson emphasize? Examples: formulation of a concept, definition, rule; identification of examples; application of a skill.

7. What are the lesson's activities and for what purpose? Examples: discussion, question and answer, choral response; academic skill building, check comprehension, obtain feedback, practice sequencing.

8. **What materials will you use and why those? Examples: textbooks, chalkboard, handouts, manipulatives, pen and paper; to meet the objective, to provide a variety of activities to meet different learning styles and to motivate, to reteach.**

9. **How will you know the intended results of the lesson? At what data will you look? Examples: test, project, product, demonstration, application and/or extension of knowledge or skills.**

10. **How will you manage materials during the lesson? Examples: distribution system, collection system, placement of materials, routines for use of materials.**

K W L Strategy

The KWL strategy was developed by Donna Ogle to aid the construction of meaning before reading, listening, or participating in an activity.

K = Know W = Want to know L = Learned

What I know About:	What I want to know

ACTION IDEAS

Use the space below to jot down ideas you can use or adapt.

Think, Pair, and Share

Directions:

1. Think for a minute or two about the ideas presented, their application, and/or their meaning.

2. Pair with another person to share.

3. Share an idea and/or an experience with the larger group.

Write, Pair, and Share

1. Summarize the main ideas and/or the application of the presentation.

2. Use words, pictures, or diagrams to summarize.

3. Share with a partner, then with the larger group.

Write and Switch

As a group, write a brief scenario/case study similar to the examples given, involving a classroom management problem. Do not give any suggestion as to possible solutions. This scenario should be a realistic problem whose solution is primarily at or near the responsibility level and influence level of the teacher. In other words, avoid problems whose solutions require decisions or changes in other areas of the school.

The scenario should provide adequate data and necessary background information and end with the words ,"what should the teacher do?"

Allocate your time as follows:

1. For about 5 minutes, take turns sharing each others ideas, experiences, or challenging problems .

2. Decide upon and select a particular situation. Write this up as a case study. Aim for clearness and specificity.

3. Switch cases with other groups for solutions.

4. Share with one another.

Carousel Brainstorming

Directions:

1. Divide into groups of five to six.

2. Choose a recorder.

3. Choose one of the questions posted on the chart paper.

4. Quickly brainstorm responses to the posted question. The recorder writes them on the chart paper using a marker.

5. Move one sheet to the right after two minutes and at the facilitator's signal.

6. Repeat until each group returns to the original question.

7. Write a summary statement to the original question.

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